



ACHIM SZEPANSKI 2022-06-07

DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S INFINITE JEST. THE INTOXICATING BEAUTY OF EMPTINESS.

PHILOFICTION CULTURE INDUSTRY, DELEUZE/GUATTARI, HUMOUR, INFINITE JEST, IRONY,
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Those who live in closure or enclosure consume the supply and parasitise on that which justifies the closure of the system. It is the happy parasite who closes the system and for whom it is closed. Now, for Erdedy, the creation as well as the consumption of the stockpile has long since ceased to be fun, so he must make the last, or more precisely the penultimate experience as unpleasant as possible, i.e., he must cure himself through immoderation, yes cure himself of

what?, he must cure himself of addiction through immoderation, through a final punishing orgy that finally separates the knot of desire production that finds no expression and the "alienation" – held together by addiction. Strained by supplementarity or between impulses and letting himself go, Erdedy finds himself like a surrendered insect in a hole, and this is precisely his problem, of which he has a dark inkling. In his surplus-enjoyment, Erdedy is in fact the addict or the project of consumption, a truly suicidal act in which he disappears as the responsible subject, whereby he again darkly suspects that he is not alone, for he longs for the woman he does not want to see, for example. This possibility of doing things at one's own pace or consuming provisions, knowing that self-sufficiency cannot be sustained, carries the ideological figure of dependence, which is nevertheless apparently negated. It is also about constant pollution, or as Serres says, those who pollute public space with posters cancel the perception of the surrounding landscape.

Distraction is a form of boredom that, if not endured, turns against itself, see again Erdedy, who fails to be distracted by the cartridge because he fears that another cartridge might be a more entertaining film. Don't we have here once again the phenomenon of a certain multiple enjoyment before us, and isn't it a little like the porn film: for no one watches the same porn several times if he wants to see the one thing that is at stake, that he assumes is the one thing he wants to be aroused by. You can never experience the One in the same way over and over again, no matter what preferences you have for the One, what preferences it creates in you, no, if you want to see one porno, you have to see them all in order to repeat the first and one arousal. And isn't Erdedy caught in that labyrinth that Luhmann says we have no theory to explore, how in it the rat runs? We ourselves are the rats and can at best try to find a position in the labyrinth that offers comparatively good opportunities for observation. Will we ever be able to slip out of this parasite role with Serres?

One exports/imports neither the furore nor the depression, one is always in the middle of it, even if one doesn't like to admit it to oneself. Or one finally pursues a kind of wellness philosophy that neither does good nor hurts, and that knows no conceptions more than irony, which Wallace once said was the song of a bird that loves its cage. Wallace also shows that a creative process can break off at a certain point, that one can drift from a line of flight into the offside. No one has described this more precisely than Gilles Deleuze, whose studies of the melancholic art/literature of a Beckett, Kafka, Artaud, Bacon etc. show a precise knowledge of their psychomotor or psychosomatic conditions of origin. In Wallace's work, the phenomenon of autism as a medial is precisely integrated into this context. Even if everything communicates with everything, a background noise always remains present (as the exclusion of which every successful communication is constituted), which is to be flooded by the communications and leads to those encapsulations (to each his capsule, Baudrillard) that transform the figures into prostheses of screens and games. In contrast to the mere inability to feel, for certain protagonists in IJ (Infinite Jest), feeling becomes not secondary but hyper-present; for Kate Gompert, clinical depression itself is a feeling she knows as "it", that "allows" her to enter into a mythical unity with the world. "It" is the one-man hell. What is not insignificant about such cases is that the "it" is connected to the "superego" through a secret channel, whereby in excess-tolerant societies the "superego"

imposes on the individual the duty to be precisely who one is as an individual participating in pleasure. The injunction to "be who you are" ultimately produces loneliness on a scale that can no longer be mediated (IF p.999). Neither neurobiology nor genetic research can produce ultimate self-transparency because, as Lacan says, the real always sticks to us. For Kate Gompert, the real has a whole other dimension than it does for our contemporary lifestyle-enjoyers. For her, world, not unlike hysteria, means that one's own body is flooded with images, that every element of the world is like a tooth that is constantly biting. Kate Gompert has thus actually broken through to the real, and that is hell. In contrast, today's calls for the production of neo-Buddhist-inspired transgressive experiences sound like the most ridiculous and naïve appeals to merely not push through to the real, but to reality. Today, the jungle camp is the wellness centre par excellence, giving modern life, which oscillates between active euthanasia and the final rescue shot that paranoidly wants to lustfully delay, the excess it deserves. If freedom finds its just expression today in the jungle camp, then human existence is not only condemned to the nullity of the hobby, but it still has to exhibit and exploit the nullity. The human being, that is the very last advertising slogan.

There are further connections to the thoroughly exciting pages 1292- 1295 in IJ. The horizontality in which Hal suddenly finds himself is the result of a panic attack in which his dykes apparently break, and in the confusion a potential positive charge (nothing could knock me off my feet) probably creates the intuition that Hal is something like the living foundation of his own crisis. The panicky experience of the world is at times a technique for taking the risk of disintegration, bearing in mind that there is nothing left to expect, nothing left to lose. The particular sensitivity to possibilities of collapse and to the extreme fragility of standing and running, of verticality itself, implies in this situation the reversal of flight forward or flight into actionism, not quite as the cybernetic hypothesis cultivates, which understands panic as a change of state of a self-regulating system; here, rather, deviation becomes a refusal to respond to the machine and human feedback loops: I let myself fall, I would rather not, I enjoy my passivity/ horizontality against the dispositives of the screen space. I refuse that activism that does not escape the ridiculous dispositives filled with excrement and flesh, the technology of having to tell fortunes (Hamlet) and the self-checking work of control. The final spasm of prophylactic focussing means that the phantasms presented as defensive functions lead in a kind of short circuit to disconnection, the result of which Hal perversely enjoys. Neither 0 nor 1 lies Hal between the absolute third and the absolute nothing. The title of the parody of the Alma Mater (here to be understood in a double sense) refers to the normal insanity of a random sentence by a systemic cyberneticist, in which it is said that it is the structure itself that continually poses new control problems and therefore by no means primarily produces efficiency assurance, just as, conversely, efficiency first produces the need for security, which attempts to guarantee the continuity of performance through the establishment of certain structures of thought and action. The natural enemy of sensitivity is efficiency, especially efficiency that is constituted by a need for security. Hal's sensibility places itself in quite pragmatic relations; its degree of sensibility depends on how much it is or allows itself to be entangled in a problem context, how much it is absorbed in a mere functioning of a course of action.

Hal's horizontal encounter with the screen space is thus a permanent moment in which certain intensities show themselves (intense horizontality), whereby the space is a territory that actualises both the power and the powerlessness of the body and actualises itself in intensity differences. The axiom that appears here is that the visible as the visible can only spring from a horizon when the non-visible has withdrawn so that the visible can be given at all, or, to put it another way, this encounter refers to the territory of the non-said, to the singularity of the moment, which as an element of time simultaneously jumps out of its flow, and it is precisely this that qualifies it as a singularity. The jumping out and the nuncstans correlate with each other, of course, otherwise Hal could not lie in his little sarcophagus as the effect of a panic attack. It is interesting in this context that Wallace is well aware that the neutralisation of any intensity is itself an intensification (intense horizontality), which means nothing else than that Hal at the moment abandons himself to a different pulsation than before, which as the years of verticality have prevented any catching of breath. For the anthropological genesis of verticality, rhythm, as Canetti suggests, is probably more important than the act of standing. "Rhythm is originally a rhythm of the feet. Every man walks, and as he walks on two legs and strikes the ground with his feet alternately, a rhythmic sound arises, whether he intends it or not." Each body, insofar as it limps or jumps, assumes untenable positions or brings rhythms with it, which as traces, according to Canetti, supposedly form the origin of writing. "The equivalence of the participants branches out in the equivalence of their limbs. Whatever is mobile in a human being acquires a life of its own, each leg, each arm lives as if on its own." (Canetti) To what extent Wallace's conquest of a dissonant tempo in tennis proceeds via mathematics and/or an engagement with improvisation would be worth investigating. (IJ. P.1292)

The flip side of the phenomenon of unconditional surrender is revealed in the fact that people recoil from the pull of a total absence of properties (with a simultaneous excess of properties) or a fundamental indeterminacy, or either draw into themselves the emptiness of their surroundings and their gaps or occupy them with certain signifiers: God, state, topology, etc. In the end, Hal only has the remark for this: "Somehow that was nice." The joke here is indeed that it is not only the madman who thinks he is a king who is mad, but also the king who really acts like he is a king because he does not see through the contingent-fictive game of knowing and mis-knowing that entitles him to the throne (cf. Žižek). Ergo, in this panopticon in which Hal finds himself, pretty much everyone is crazy, well, and after Hal has played out a few scenarios and been shaken by a panic attack that simultaneously produces clarity and shadows, nothing can knock him down, at least when he is lying down. The screen room like Hal's inner living space harbours at this very moment the feeling of being folded, before perhaps being swept away by a fall into a dark room below, as if continually collapsing in on itself, not becoming more densely composed but merely crumbling. In the end, his "inwardness" is at best still a threshold space, a threshold and its respective possible transgressions. (Hal is also a free spirit somewhere because he is an empty spirit). This with a clear tendency or even urge to procrastinate, whereby his indifference corresponds to a looseness that allows the spirit to become motionless to the point of paralysis despite all vicissitudes and adversities. This paralysis is by all means a suffering that resists refraining from the expression of suffering, which in turn presupposes an ever more unrestricted

control of the situation, which succeeds here (the clarity of attention, the edibility of the world) and fails at the same time (the disgust of edibility).

And finally to the black miracle of interest or addiction (in German, by the way, addiction goes back to the Old High German word *Sud* and later *Seuche*). The imperative of trade and surrender or surrender is accompanied, as it were like a shadow, by procrastination as a shadow or anathema. Perhaps the counter-figure to those persons who want to lay down their lives for something to their peril is the character Ulrich from Musil's *Man Without Qualities*, who, according to Joseph Vogl, in resisting an unequivocal will, comes to a threshold where acting as well as refraining becomes equally difficult, and faced with a choice, precisely, faced with the choice between choosing and not choosing, Ulrich remains unclear and undecided. Hal's allergy to action is linked to a kind of literary problematisation that opens up a field where fantastic precision (everything had too many frames in the second) creates a specific perception that remains unfinished and closable, something that is folded apart into all its parts and components, its circumstances, etc., flanked by a hazy seeing that yields black when the shadow gwins or the light fades. At the very least, the free-floating moping is lost, not unrelated to *acaedia*, the feverish idleness in which an inner restlessness is combined with the pursuit or perception of various things without serious meaning. perception of the most diverse things without serious meaning or purpose and perhaps even leads to a Hamletisation of the world, here to a crisis, an overthrow of systems of judgement, which, as Vogl Musil has summed up, can perhaps be interpreted as follows: "Viewed with it (the fantastic work), the world is that which is precisely not the case, it reveals a principle of the lack of reason".

To distort Wallace's textual mask to his readability, i.e. to show how it can be defigured, is laborious. Apart from the emotional reluctance to read Wallace, the disappointed longing that there is nothing here to read that one wants to read right now arises precisely from not being able to bear that there is nothing at the bottom of any book to read. The question of any reading here is also what choices are available to me with what capacity for selectivity of reading. In the blog, the interpretation of the text pits text against text or book against book and, indeed, faith against faith, when it is so little about a mystery or a madness in Wallace, indeed, the book does not want to be interpreted, retold and perhaps even the text not shifted but experimentally tested (Deleuze in response to the German writer).

At the same time, I argue for a "structural" analysis, among other things:

(a) the immanence of the two machines in Wallace, (b) the segmentarity of the blocks (the spatial and intensity models of AA and eschaton (map and real), (c) the deterritorialisation capacity of an agencement or, precisely, the death line of this agencement (television, cartridges, etc) – in Wallace, due to time, an unfinished media analysis, media, as the in-between only conceived. The disposable means are always medially usable, as power-effective and power-distributing rules of use, as pragmatic, artistic and communicative approaches (see his description of the relationship between telephone and videophone), d) the self-organising capacity of the text, the specific of a Wallace, e) the empty centre and the question of the periphery... the spinners at the edge of the desert.

I referenced Michel Serres in the initial submissions on dfw, Wallace thinking in IJ in terms of fractals. What happens there, e.g. in the eschaton game, at the border between cartography and the subjective experiential worlds of dating? And what happens when one gets stuck again and again? Serres describes this in relation to the Northwest Passage, when one can be trapped there. "You are stuck, ten minutes, ten hours, four days or nine months. Time begins to imitate space, just as the ice imitated the map a moment ago. Maps of spaces piled on top of each other, lost of scale, with complication recorded as random variation." Strangely caught in something that also resembles the (fractal) flight of the fly in terms of its course. Where the technical language of philosophy reaches its limits, where philosophy, under its own surveillance, only knows that literature is always already further along, it is indeed necessary to write a literature that is under a different type of surveillance, or rather, of dis-subjection, and at the same time to rethink the role of translations and transports between philosophy and literature, which, on the part of philosophy, undoubtedly lie where it creates conceptual persons. In relation to Wallace, I think it means thinking the form of the fractal, where, as in the Kafka writings of Deleuze/Guattari, the distinction between form and matter takes the place of structure and meaning, so that Wallace invents fractals of infinitely long paths, which here, however, lead to no destination, cooking curves, worlds of gaps, full of emptiness and filled with gaps as the images of pure differences that pave strange nets in which one gets stuck, ramifications that freeze again and again. The routes Wallace takes are prepositions that precede every position, including the philosophical one. They are aleatory, infinite in their variations, and Wallace attempts, on this side of enigmas and mannerisms, to simultaneously create something that the nouveau roman has created in rudimentary form, namely, a kind of crystalline description that has the paradoxical effect of constantly re-fathoming the gap between the linguistic and the non-linguistic by describing a thing in as much detail as possible, in all its aspects, whereby both the contours of the linguistic context of reference and the representational contours start to lurch. Wallace, for example, does not write triangle, but Sierpinski triangle, make-up mirror instead of mirror, and so on. He constantly clarifies, and following Michel Serres, one could say that the average reader now complains that he has to look things up in the dictionary, but the mathematician or the marketing expert is pleased that he is respected (and not respected, that is where the use of humour or irony begins). Wallace pays homage here to a predilection that was already one of Victor Hugo's: putting a Jacobin cap on the old dictionary.

These are precisely not only puzzling procedures that serve permanent variation, but also unravelling procedures; here the need to develop a local vocabulary is taken into account in order to "get as close to the beast as possible." This may be painful to read, but at the same time it reveals learning processes, if one wants to take part in them while reading, and very big "aha" effects. The paradoxical effect of such a description may also consist in creating as well as erasing the object as material and linguistic, that is, the infinite singularity of things can never be materially represented or duplicated by a finite linguistic system, in this case the novel, without the entire language having to be used as a system of reference and losing its function as a system of difference. Infinite Fun hangs in this paradox, and what matters here, as in Kafka, is that the novel accounts for the return of the real and matter by fabricating machinic agencements. In

Wallace, as in Kafka, there is no mere evidence, but a) the enigmatisation of the languages of traffic and state (Wallace must go a decisive step further in the wake of the complexity of contemporary regimes of discourse and gaze and the figures of empty speech), b) the connection of individual with political events, c) the integration of individual utterances into collective, technical stratagems, psychatrical, athletic as well as discourses of every kind. The event in literature has always taken place in the interstice of transcription and the most diverse procedures of dismantling (the grotesque, the ironic, the humoresque, etc). The diagnosis of all the diabolical powers that await us, which Deleuze/Guatarri ascribe to Kafka, would have to be explicated anew on the basis of a Wallace analysis. Pure doctrine can be shat on without further ado.

"In the beginning was the tohawabu. Today we say: the noise, the background noise. Where should the word come from, if not from the noise? Our ancestors said: the chaos. They were placed in a world – streams of signals surround us. To each his disorder, at the limits of all order. But the difference is not as great as one might think. Pantagruel, like us and many other sailors, had passed the islands of Tohu and Bowu before plunging into the furious hurricane. It is not every day that one is shipwrecked. And the day comes when the ship sails through a sea of nonsensical voices." (Michel Serres) This is the beginning or initial condition where the fluid edges of order and disorder emerge, borders where the boundaries of subject and object lose meaning or where order is the rare thing and disorder the rule. Obviously, Wallace could no longer stand this boundary. Perhaps the sea of false voices is not that of a storm or a cloud, but that of laws, rules, orders. One can change into the other, without mediations, and arises through transmissions, distributions and simultaneity, where simultaneity or reversible time is not reducible to space, which would be less than an approximation. As much as it is not easy to understand that we live in different times – reversible time is the time of order, irreversible time the time of disorder – it is not easy to understand that Wallace, without establishing a mapping relation or map, knots several times in the text, including the third time, negentropic time, the irreversible invention of a new time. Poetry and science, an exact rhapsody, Serres writes. That is the starting point, also from IJ.

Since I have now quoted Michel Serres quite arbitrarily in order to establish cross-connections to Wallace with his philosophy, there is also an implicit approach to Deleuze here (on p.1156 of US, Wallace has nuanced this by means of an ironising allusion to Deleuze). Certainly time (including that of the novel) does not flow along a line, but rather with complex manifolds, fissures, perlocations, breakthroughs, accelerations and decelerations; time is aleatorically dispersed, it percolates, it runs and it does not run. Serres compares these manifolds to the flames dancing in a fire, manifolds contrary to reversible time (clock time, time of the maximum niche, that equilibrium in which culture, history and work freeze and in which the human rat sets its cage spinning and believes in progress while it goes round in circles in the tertmills of everyday life, etc.). Now this equilibrium is also an interval, an order that inevitably proceeds towards disorder. Carnot's revolution and the industrial revolution bring us irreversible time; we resemble a machine in which a drum in regular rotation disorganises us to the point of complete undifferentiation. We become in two different and even opposite times and we are in a third time,

the time of negentropy, which is opposed to the entropic vector. Differences emerge, inventions, discoveries, the new, etc. While classical time refers to geometry and metrics, not at all to space, Serres' theory of time, our time, is a crumpled time; crumpled manifolds that can be directly represented by topology, the science of cracks and neighbourhoods. All times are seen relative to a system or systems, which can be open or closed, and with them times become knotted and distributed; they are complexions, similar to how distant points in a pocketbook that is folded or crumpled are suddenly very close, or two very close points, if you tear the pocketbook apart, can become very far apart. I think you can understand this time problem or topology in detail in IF if you want to. On a formal level, Wallace develops a kind of map of relations and distributions, a network of ramifications, by inventing paths, i.e., by means of the application of a multiplicity of prepositions, networks are pioneered. The thing always becomes paradoxical, see Eschaton's game, when it comes to "mapping" a fragmented chaos (family, AA, world politics, etc.) onto maps. And Wallace does nothing else here that Zenon already did (with Serres): He travels from the two-dimensionality of the planes/maps into the three-dimensional multiplicity, he begins to cut and vary, re-establishes orders, whereby the distribution of the figures on the map even has a certain stability. The maps, however, do not map and are at the same time unstable. The novel gives us an experience/suspicion that the real is paradoxical, stochastically regular. Order, rule and reason are in very close proximity to the improbable, the rational is a miracle. Here I am again referring to Michel Serres. Constancy and the dialectical synthesis, which is nothing more than constancy, is an extraordinary entity that Serres replaces with a philosophy or Wallace with a literature of circumstances, whereby circumstances captures the totality of adjectives and prepositions. This allows a literature or theory of nuances and nuances to be set in motion. Nuances are diffuse spaces, which Serres describes as cloud and stream respectively. The confusing or diffuse is the chaos cloud or the chaos stream. It now becomes interesting that the strategies of irony or humour are based on the confusion or diffusion of the text and its elements. While humour describes a movement that ridicules something different from itself, namely the system itself, within which humour is articulated because the system contains the precondition of ridiculousness within itself, irony operates through strategies of exaggeration and exaggeration of the opponent's position in order to implicitly support its own position. Thus, while humour is in the middle, perverse and always on the way or on the surface, irony remains attached to meaning and the system of meaning, however, irony can achieve similar effects as humour through confusion, the fusion of differential positions. Wallace makes extensive use of the stylistic devices or stratagems of confusion and diffusion to thwart the seriousness of mega-capitalism or whatever and its discourses.

Today we have come full circle to what Deleuze and Serres call the transition from the judicial to the objective. We are all both the cause of the US and its object, a fun that is implicitly everyone's business in Wallace, where responsibilities are hard to assign but the virtue of restraint in the face of the growth of neuroses, narcissisms, fun-foods, avarice and indolence is more likely to be traced among the broken and the included/excluded than anywhere else. Who could fail to see Gately as a kind of conceptual person to whom Wallace concedes something like shame. Now Wallace has written neither a satire nor a humoresque because he knows that irony likes to

institutionalise itself in the form of satire, humour likes to carnivalise itself in the form of the institution. With these institutionalisations, both the energies of confusion and diffusion are blocked and attracted to the contexts of seriousness. At the same time, irony and humour are quasi isolated or relegated to the spaces of art, literature, etc. The so-called ludicrous is isolated from the serious. The isolation of the so-called ridiculous from the world of serious situations conceals the fact that social objectivity has long since passed into the stage of the ridiculous. Humour and irony can only endanger the serious discourses of science and technology etc. because confusion precedes debate (it no longer depends on us, everything depends on us, but nobody understands that). Government and opposition are in a hopeless state of confusion that you only have to click on to blow away all seriousness at once. The only way to do this, as Nietzsche already knew, is to increase or inhibit (the exaggeration games of irony); one can never go far enough with deterritorialisations, says Deleuze, referring of course to the stratagem of humour. Wallace's explication of Deleuzian humour and specific irony stylises the modalities of superficiality by means of diffusion and confusion, pursuing a representation of the systems of surfaces (the superficial) through processes of dissolution and amalgamation, preceded, however, by the ensembles of produced things and conditional circumstances, the parasitic obliquities. Needless to say, the endless fun is long over when the new narcissisms revolve around increasing the modalities of the "self" or around the biochemical, beauty-surgical and technological effectivation of individual human capital that one levels through the purchase of doping, wellness, fitness and psycho products. Wallace knew that very well.

Translated by deepl.

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